



THE AVOCET

The Newsletter of the Santa Clara Audubon Society

February 2002

San Jose CBC Draws 120 Counters

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper tops list of rarities

by Ann Verdi and Grant Hoyt

The San Jose Christmas Bird Count was held on December 16, 2001 under near-perfect birding conditions: light overcast skies, mild temperatures, and minimal wind. In spite of these optimum conditions our species total of 163 was down a bit; however, we had 120 counters out in the field recording good, solid numbers of our regularly occurring wintering birds plus a few vagrant rarities, totalling 80,696 individuals.

Many of our more unusual bird sightings are recorded around the baylands of the Alviso sector, and this year was no exception. A decided highlight was a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper found by Mike Mammoser in the New Chicago Marsh at the Alviso Environmental Education Center. Mike had been searching for a Ruff which had been reported previously, but was not to be found on the Count day. The Ruff was re-found on Dec. 18 by Mike Rogers as a "Count week" bird.

A male Eurasian Wigeon was also seen on the CBC in New Chicago Marsh. Other notable birds recorded from the Alviso area included a Lesser Yellowlegs and a Greater White-fronted

Goose. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was reported from the Coyote Creek Field Station by Vicki Silvas-Young.

The Lesser Black-backed Gull obliged us by showing up at Lake Cunningham on Count day for its fifth winter. This rare gull had not been seen prior to Dec. 16 despite concerted efforts to find it, so its return on the 16th was a welcome surprise. Another returning rare bird was the "Harlan's" subspecies of Red-tailed Hawk, back at its familiar perch along the Guadalupe River at Trimble Rd. This individual, with its distinctive dark body plumage and unusual tail pattern, is spending its sixth winter here. Also seen in the same spot was a Western Tanager.

Tree and Violet-green Swallows were observed both at Lake Cunningham and Alviso, while a single Barn Swallow was noted in Alviso. Rounding out our rarities was a White-throated Sparrow seen at Ed Levin County Park.

Burrowing Owl numbers up

We had some unexpected good news with the Burrowing Owl total - 34 individuals were seen, including 17 at the San Jose Airport by Mike Azevedo. The others were recorded in scattered locations, mainly in Milpitas and northern Santa Clara. This is a significantly higher number of Burrowing Owls than have been recorded over the past several years, although it likely reflects the diligent effort by Mike at the airport rather than an overall increase in owls.

continued on Page 10

**General Membership Meeting
"Marbled Murrelets in the
Santa Cruz Mountains"
with David Suddjian
Wednesday, February 20, 7:30 PM
Palo Alto Arts Center
Newell & Embarcadero Rds.**

Local biologist and Santa Cruz County bird expert David Suddjian will offer an in-depth look at the Marbled Murrelets of the Santa Cruz Mountains, an imperiled species at the edge of its range. Suddjian has conducted intensive field research on this old-growth forest species since 1990. The Marbled Murrelet is one of the most difficult species to study, and even some of its basic biology remains poorly understood in spite of years of study in the forest and at sea. This program will describe the mysterious murrelet's local distribution, habitat needs, natural history and population trends, and delve into some of the management challenges we face to protect it.

*Creek mapping-----Page 4
Open space vote-----Page 5
Field Notes-----Page 6
Complete CBC totals---Pgs 8 - 9
"Yes" on Prop. 40!-----Page 11*

February Field Trips

Please carpool if possible; bring binoculars, field guides, layered clothing.

LO = Lunch optional

RC = Heavy rain cancels

Saturday Feb. 2, 9:00 AM

San Francisco's Southern Parks

Half day. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415)664-0983. Meet at Candlestick Point State Recreation Area, a good place to see shorebirds, bay ducks, loons and raptors. We will then visit San Francisco's McLaren Park for land birds and dabbling ducks. Other lesser known but birdy parks may be visited, time permitting. From Hwy 101 exit just past Brisbane Lagoon at Candlestick/3Com Park off-ramp. Continue east along Harney Way and turn right onto Jamestown/Hunters Point Expressway. While driving along Expressway watch for entrance to Candlestick State Recreation Area on right and enter (no fee). Meet at end of paved road that runs through park.

Sunday Feb. 3, 9:00 AM

Charleston Slough

Half day. Leader: Allen Royer (408)288-7768. Meet at Terminal Way at end of San Antonio Rd. north off Hwy 101 in Mtn. View. Shorebirds, ducks, assorted waterfowl. As always, all are welcome but birding and discussions will be geared toward beginning birders. Bring a scope if you have one.

Saturday Feb. 9, 8:30 AM

Coyote Reservoir

Half day. Leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. From Hwy 101 in Gilroy take Leavesley Rd. exit east for 1.5 miles, turn left on New Ave., then right on Roop Rd. Go left at "T" intersection, then left again on Coyote Reservoir Rd. to Lakeview Picnic area. Group will bird from parking area for first 1/2 hour. Waterbirds, raptors. **LO, RC**

Sunday Feb. 10, 9:00 AM

Pescadero Marsh and vicinity

Half day. Leader: Sue James (650)348-0315. Meet at first parking lot south of

bridge over Pescadero Creek on Hwy 1 approx. 5 miles south of Hwy 84. Loons, grebes, gulls, shorebirds, ducks. Bring spotting scope if you have one. **LO, RC**

Wednesday Feb. 13, 8:30 AM

Coyote Reservoir

Half day. Leaders: Emelie Curtis (408)779-2637 and Jane Glass. Group will bird parking area for first 1/2 hour. Directions: see Feb. 9 listing. Waterbirds, raptors. **LO, RC**

Saturday Feb. 16, 8:00 AM

Santa Cruz coastal hotspots

Half day. Leader: Todd Newberry (questions - call Bob R. at (408)253-7527). Meet at Santa Cruz lighthouse on W. Cliff Dr. From Hwy 17 take Hwy 1 north, turn left on Bay St., then right on Cliff Dr. to lighthouse on left. A rare opportunity to see local hotspots. Dress in layers.

Sunday Feb. 17, 8:00 AM

Fremont Lagoons

Half day. leader: Bob Reiling (408)253-7527. From I-880 north of San Jose take Gateway Blvd. exit west, turn left on Fremont Blvd. Park in lot on right at end of street. Come prepared to identify gulls, which may include Thayer's and Glaucous. Bring a spotting scope if you have one. **RC**

Saturday Feb. 23, 8:00 AM

Oka Ponds/Los Gatos Creek Park

Half day. Leader: Ann Verdi (408)266-5108. From Hwy 17 in Los Gatos take Lark Ave. exit west. Turn right on Oka Rd., left on Mozart Ave., then immediately right on Oka Lane. Meet at gate. **RC**

Sunday Feb. 24, 8:30 AM

Alum Rock Park

Half day. Leader: Dave Cook (408)275-1492. From Hwy 101 or I-680 take McKee Rd. northeast toward hills. Turn left on Toyon Ave., right on Penitencia Creek Rd., and continue into park. Meet in "Rustic Lands" parking area on right

just before reaching "T" intersection. Moderately strenuous 3 to 4 mile walk. Resident breeding birds, early migrants, lingering winter birds. Be prepared for some mud. Possible entrance fee. **LO, RC**

Wednesday Feb. 27, 8:30 AM

Alviso

Half day. Leader: Dick Carlson (650)949-9590. From Hwy 237 take Lafayette/Gold St. exit north, turn left on Elizabeth St., then right on Hope St. to Marina Parking Area. Gulls, shorebirds, possible Burrowing Owl. **LO, RC**

Saturday Mar. 2, 8:30 AM

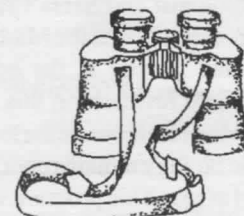
Ogier Ponds

Half day. Leader: Grant Hoyt (650)969-7892. From Hwy 101 in Morgan Hill take Cochrane Rd. west to Monterey Hwy, turn right, go north 2.6 miles, turn right toward Model Airplane park where power towers cross road. Follow road for 1/2 mile, park in gravel lot at bend in road. Raptors, freshwater marsh & local breeding birds. **RC**

Sunday Mar. 3, 8:30 AM

Coyote Hills Regional Park

Half day. Leader: Frank Vanslager (408)257-3647. Take Hwy 84/Dumbarton Bridge east toward Newark. Exit right on Thornton, then left over freeway as Thornton becomes Paseo Padre. Turn left at Patterson Ranch/Commerce Rd. into park. Meet at far end of Quarry Parking lot, 1/4 mile past park entrance. Entrance fee. **LO, RC**



Calendar

Tuesday Feb. 5, 4:00 PM
Education Committee meeting
McClellan Ranch Park.

Tuesday Feb. 5, 7:30 PM
Board of Directors meeting
McClellan Ranch Park. All members welcome to attend.

Wednesday Feb. 6, 7:30 PM
Bay Area Bird Photographers presents Howard and Lynn Jameson with their slide presentation on the birds and scenery of Malheur NWR and Hart Mtn. in eastern Oregon, and northern California's Klamath NWR, Eagle Lake and Goose Lake. Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center, E. Embarcadero Rd., Palo Alto.

Tuesday Feb. 12, 9:30 AM
Eve Case Bird Discussion Group will meet at the home of Pat and Jean Dubois, 17150 Buena Vista Ave, Los Gatos (408) 395-4264. Topic: Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Wednesday Feb. 20, 7:30 PM
General meeting, Palo Alto
"Marbled Murrelets of the Santa Cruz Mountains" with David Suddjian (see notice on Page 1).

Wednesday Feb. 27, 7:30 PM
Environmental Action Committee meeting at McClellan Ranch Park.

PLAN AHEAD:

Wednesday Mar. 20 in Palo Alto:
"National Audubon — Local and National Accomplishments" with Judd Klement, NAS Grassroots Coordinator, Mike Sellors of California Audubon, and SCVAS' Craig Breon.

Wednesday Apr. 17 in Palo Alto:
"The Beloved Burrowing Owl's Biology" with Lynn Trulio.

Note: General meetings in Campbell will resume late this year or early next year when Campbell Community Center renovations are completed.

Volunteer Ventures

by Jennifer Peritz
SCVAS Programs Coordinator

Many thanks to those who joined us at Volunteer Breakfast last month. I hope you all enjoyed the breakfast and the opportunity to mingle with other volunteers as much as I did!

This New Year is packed with projects for SCVAS and our volunteers. In order to keep track of all the current and long-term volunteer opportunities, I have created the **Volunteer Ventures Announcement Board**. The next time you stop by the Nature Shop, take a look for the board just to the left of the front door. If you're a current volunteer and are interested in changing to a new position, or if you are simply stopping by the Shop to pick up some birdseed, take a moment to check out our most recent postings. You just might find something that's perfect for YOU!

After many years of dedicated volunteer work for SCVAS, Chapter Librarian **Marti Oetzel** and her husband George are moving eastward. In addition to being a skilled and conscientious caretaker of our books, Marti is also a great friend to those of us in the office. We thank you, Marti, for your hard work and wish you the best!

Although it will be hard to fill her shoes, we are currently seeking a volunteer to become the new Librarian. Library experience is helpful, but not required, as training will be provided. Tasks associated with this volunteer opportunity include maintaining a current catalogue of books, shelving books and periodicals, and reviewing donated books to assess which should be added to the library. This position requires approximately 2-3 hours every 2 weeks. Serving as Chapter Librarian is also a great way to become directly involved with the office and chapter.

If being outdoors is closer to your idea of a good time, the next two volunteer ventures might be just what you're looking for. You may be aware of the plight of the Western Bluebird and other cavity-nesting species whose population numbers are diminishing as their habitat is taken away. The removal of old, seemingly-unused trees for aesthetic or fire-safety reasons and the clearing of woodland areas for development greatly impact



the Oak Titmouse, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, and other cavity-nesting species. In response to the declining population of these species, SCVAS and other organizations like the North American Bluebird Society have developed programs to provide a network of nestboxes and trails, which act as alternative cavities and sites. Great effort goes into the set-up, maintenance, and monitoring of these boxes and trails, but the payoff is certainly worthwhile! This year alone, our volunteer monitors reported 862 successful fledglings from 9 different species.

Coordinated by SCVAS' Volunteer **Dave "Tex" Houston**, the Santa Clara County division of the **California Bluebird Recovery Program** is currently seeking volunteers for the upcoming nesting season. To help prepare for this vital time of the year, at least two Maintenance Days are being scheduled. Spend the day walking the trail, learning about the program, and working on any boxes that need cleaning or fixing. If you'd like to get even more involved, consider becoming a trail monitor. There are currently a number of trails that have already been established, but require a monitor. Monitoring nestboxes is a great way to enjoy the outdoors, become more actively involved in birding, and increase the survival rate of these special creatures. To find out more about this program please contact me at the number below:

(408) 252-3740 or <programs@scvas.org>.

Mapping our Creeks — a New SCVAS Venture

Thanks to a grant from the Santa Clara Valley Water District, SCVAS is about to launch a new project to map non-native, invasive plant species in four local creeks. The mapping project should be a fun opportunity for volunteers to become familiar with local creeks and GPS (Global Positioning Satellite) technology, and the end result should help the Water District, SCVAS, and other community and governmental organizations improve local creek habitats by removing these invasives.

The problem of invasives

Invasive, non-native plants exist in virtually every watershed in Santa Clara County. After habitat loss from development and other forms of land conversion, invasive species are often considered to have the most negative impacts on native species diversity. Examples include: nest site competition between native songbirds and invasive European house sparrow; and star thistle's encroachment on ranches and open space preserves in our region.

Non-native invaders often hit creeks and their inhabitants hard. First, many invasive plants out-compete native species for the limited space in remaining local creek habitat, reducing the value of those creeks to local birds and wildlife. In addition, because local wildlife has not adapted to using the invaders, few of the invasive species provide the wildlife values associated with our native plants. Finally, some non-natives such as *Arundo donax* can grow dense enough to impede creek flows and trap debris, leading to increased potential for flooding and wildfires. Considering that nearly 80% of local bird species rely on creeks during part or all of the year, concern over invasives is justifiably growing.

Introducing our project

Stemming from an idea brought forward at SCVAS' Creek Groups Workshop 2000, we developed the idea for this program to combat invasive plant species and their many negative impacts. Last summer, when the Water District released a request for proposals under its Commu-

nity Grant-in-Aid Program, our potential program grew one step closer to reality. With funding from the Water District and help from four creek-oriented organizations, SCVAS plans to locate, identify, and map four non-native, invasive plant species in four county watersheds. The main goal of this project is to collect baseline information regarding the prevalence and location of invasive plant species. By collecting data and creating maps, we hope to facilitate future eradication efforts, and also raise awareness among SCVAS members and the general public about the harm posed by invasives, and the potential to remedy those harms.

Given the large number of different invasive species, this project could be daunting. In order to set a reasonable goal for a one-year project, we limited our scope to four plant species. We wanted to be sure that once we mapped a species, it had a high likelihood of being removed by an agency or organization conducting mitigation or restoration efforts. This meant that the species chosen must be a relatively manageable. We also needed species that occur in the riparian areas of our county. Our last criterion was that the plant be considered a high priority on the California Exotic Pest Plant Council's "A-1" list of most invasive wildland pest plants. Accordingly, we chose Giant Reed (which is commonly referred to by its scientific name, *Arundo donax*), Salt Cedar, Cape Ivy, and Pampas Grass. Each of these species has already been targeted for eradication by other local organizations, so we should find our efforts synergistic.

Another challenge was choosing which watersheds, or rather portions thereof, to map. Because of their geographic distribution throughout the County, relatively high resource value, and connection to local creek groups, we chose the following reaches to be included in the project: San Francisquito from Searsville Dam to the Bay; Stevens Creek from Stevens Creek Dam to the Bay; Coyote Creek from Anderson Dam to the Bay, and Uvas Creek from Uvas Dam to the Pajaro River. Cooperation with local creeks groups is particularly

important, as they will have the best local knowledge and most incentive to see this project to completion and on to the next stage: plant removal and revegetation with natives. Although SCVAS will lead the coordination effort, this project would not be possible without the support of Friends of Stevens Creek, San Francisquito Creek Watershed Council, Santa Clara County Streams for Tomorrow, and other organizations that already have a strong knowledge of these four creeks.

How you can be involved

One of the most important components of this project is volunteer labor. Although team leaders have already been identified for each watershed, we are currently seeking volunteers who can help us carry out this significant and exciting project. SCVAS Programs Coordinator Jennifer Peritz will be coordinating teams of 4-6 volunteers for each creek. Each team will walk the creek banks, identify and locate the four targeted plant species, and map the data with GPS equipment. If this sounds tricky, don't worry! Each volunteer will be trained in both plant identification and GPS technology. This is an excellent opportunity not only to get out and enjoy your local creek, but also to help restore it. Training should start in late February or March, and we hope to complete the mapping by late 2002. To join one of SCVAS' Mapping Teams, please see Jennifer's Volunteer Ventures column on page 4.

Thanks to the Water District

A big "Thank you" to the Santa Clara Valley Water District and its Board of Directors for establishing the Community Grants-In-Aid Program. Our grant was just over \$20,000, but the program awarded nearly \$250,000 in grants last year. If ours and other projects go well, this could be another strong example of the increasingly cooperative nature of the Water District with our local conservation community.

—Jennifer Peritz and Craig Breon

Local Open Space Funding Victory

SCVAS lends a hand in close decision;
new tax \$ will buy and preserve land

by Craig Breon

You can be excused for not even knowing that there was a crucial vote last fall on the future of Santa Clara County's open lands. The mail-in ballot, sent only to property owners within the boundaries of the Santa Clara County Open Space Authority, was hardly noticed by the press or local politicians . . . or even by many of the people who received ballots. Nevertheless, a narrow victory for this property assessment measure means that tens of thousands of acres of hillsides, streams, and agricultural lands will be purchased and preserved for habitat and recreation.

What's more, you helped it happen, even if you never received a ballot. SCVAS contributed \$5000 and our good name to the modest campaign mounted to support the measure. Your membership and donations give us the resources to help make this kind of difference.

Background

The Santa Clara County Open Space Authority was established in 1993, but has received little notice over the years. For the first three or four years of its existence, the Authority became mired in a legal conflict over its very validity. This kept it from acquiring land, as prices escalated for even remote parcels in our region. When the Authority emerged victorious from its legal issues, it found that its share of local property taxes, amounting to approximately \$4 million a year, didn't stretch very far in our inflated land market.

Despite these factors, the Authority has acquired and preserved almost 8000 acres to date, in addition to helping The Nature Conservancy acquire another 1100 acres in a conservation easement. The Authority will soon open its first trail, on the former Kirk property above Alum Rock Park. The trail — to be named the Baccardo Trail — will connect to an existing trail system in Alum Rock and will allow hikers to reach the crest of the eastern hills overlooking the Valley of the Heart's Delight.

A very close vote

On December 31, 2001, the Open Space Authority reported that its property assessment ballot measure had passed with 50.9% of the vote. As a result, the average property owner within the Authority's boundary will see their assessment raised from \$12 to \$32 per year. When that funding starts to flow in 2003, the Authority will then have just over \$12 million annually for open space acquisition, management, and recreation.

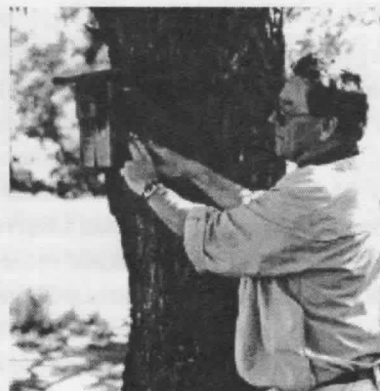
This ballot was a weird one. Only property owners got to vote, and those votes were weighted based on the size of their parcels. As a result, the vote was close, despite the fact that nearly two-thirds of the ballots returned with a "yes" vote. The local Taxpayers Association may still challenge the results, but we're hoping they don't.

The small campaign, which spent approximately \$150,000 to help pass the measure, was run by the Silicon Valley Conservation Council, started a year and a half ago with partners including Cisco Systems and the developers of Coyote Valley. It is odd, then, that SCVAS would contribute, while suing those same players over proposed Coyote Valley development (we recently appealed our CEQA case, which was defeated at the local Superior Court level, to an Appellate Court). As the saying goes, politics makes for strange bedfellows, and in this case our \$5,000 was certainly money well spent.

What we get — lots of beautiful land

Lloyd Wagstaff, General Manager for the Authority, says that the "yes" vote will mean the preservation of tens of thousands of acres of land over the next decade. Lands like Coyote Ridge, where rare wildflowers bloom and butterflies hover just to the east of Highway 101 (and an area that SCVAS is actively working to preserve). There will also be enough money to begin acquiring some of the remaining farmlands of Santa Clara County, which so far have been too pricey for the Authority. While funding won't officially start until 2003, the Authority can begin negotiations with willing landowners now, in anticipation of the new revenue stream.

The Open Space Authority relies heavily on volunteers to help manage its lands. If this sounds appealing to you, contact the Authority through its website: www.openspaceauthority.org or call (408) 224-7476 and ask for Laurie Kaymaker, the Volunteer Coordinator.



Dave Cook checks one of his Western Bluebird boxes. For information about volunteering with The California Bluebird Recovery Program, see the "Volunteer Ventures" article on page 3.

Field Notes

by Bill Bousman

Loons through Waterfowl

An immature **Common Loon** found on Calero Reservoir on 9 Dec (MJM, AV) was the only loon found locally in December. It remained through 12 Dec (JMa). The **Red-necked Grebe** at Shoreline Lake, first found in November, was seen there regularly in December (m.ob.). **Brown Pelicans** have lingered in the South Bay again this winter. The high count included 26 in Salt Pond A3W on 17 Dec (MJM) and three more off the Palo Alto estuary the same day (MMR). Three **American Bitterns** at the Ogier Avenue ponds on 29 Dec (RWR et al.) were the only ones found this month. A few **Greater White-fronted Geese** were found in late December. One was on the San Jose-Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) drying ponds on 16 Dec (RC, GO, VS-Y *fide* AV), one was over the Alviso Marina on 26 Dec (ViT, JS), and one was found at Cottonwood Lake on 29 Dec (AME). A **Snow Goose** was seen at well-birded Calero Reservoir on 2 Dec (AV) and then regularly from 24 Dec through the end of the month (AV). A **Tundra Swan** family of two adults and an immature stopped over briefly at the New Chicago Marsh on 3 Dec (RWR, FV, MJM). An adult was seen in flight along Hwy 101 in Morgan Hill on 6 Dec (BB-W). Almaden Reservoir remained a favorite location for **Wood Ducks** with a high count of 60 on 1 Dec (AV). Parties along Coyote Creek on the Calero-Morgan Hill CBC on 29 Dec found an impressive 64 birds from the Ogier Avenue ponds downstream to Parkway Lakes (RWR, MJM, MMR). Good numbers of **Eurasian Wigeon** were found in December. Single drakes were found regularly at the Palo Alto Flood Control Basin (FCB) during the month (m.ob.) with a high count of five males on 23 Dec (MJM). Two males seen at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 8

Dec (RK, FV et al.) followed the November records there. A male was found in the New Chicago Marsh on 16 Dec (MJM, DMcI) and was seen there through the end of the month (v.ob.). Two males and a female were there on 31 Dec (MMR et al.). **Blue-winged Teal** continued to be seen at their favored haunts in the Palo Alto FCB in December with a peak count of 12 on 16 Dec (MDd). A single male was at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 4 Dec (MMR). **Redhead** were found in

*December rarities included
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper,
Lesser Black-backed Gull,
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and
Green-tailed Towhee*

scattered locations in December. Single birds were in the Palo Alto FCB on 3 Dec (RWR, FV) and at the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 8 Dec (RK, FV et al.). Salt Pond A10 in Alviso took the major honors with 213 birds found there on 16 Dec (MMR, ViT, et al.). This is the largest concentration of Redhead we've encountered in the county. The flock wintering in the Palo Alto FCB in past years twice reached high counts of 132. Thirty-four Redhead were counted on Charleston Slough on 17 Dec (JMe, MMe, MN) and three were on the Ogier Avenue ponds 29-31 Dec (RWR, DW et al.). Always rare, a female **Tufted Duck** was seen on the Sunnyvale WPCP ponds on 4 Dec (MMR), but was not reported later in the month. A hybrid **Common x Barrow's Goldeneye**, originally found in early November, was seen regularly at Shoreline Lake in December (v.ob.). This bird seems closer to Barrow's, based on the scapular pattern. No unequivocal Barrow's were reported.

Raptors through Skimmers

Osprey were found regularly in December in their favored places (v.ob.). Nine birds were counted on the Calero-Morgan Hill CBC on 29 Dec along Coyote Creek from the Ogier Avenue ponds to Silver Creek Valley Road (RWR et al., MJM, MMR). In each of the three coverage areas the birds (2:3:4) were individually identified by plumage and molt. It is possible, however, that there was some overlap between the sections. Nonetheless, these are remarkably high counts and suggest that the fishing is good along the percolation ponds and reservoirs this winter. A **Bald Eagle** was on Calaveras Reservoir on 16 Dec (RbC, RCo *fide* MJM), an adult was at Calero Reservoir from 22 Dec through the end of the month (AV, v.ob.), and an adult was over Pacheco Crossing in Henry Coe SP on 22 Dec (JY, AL). An adult '**Harlan's**' **Red-tailed Hawk**, returning for its sixth winter along the Guadalupe River at Trimble, was seen on 16 Dec (GHt, ADeM). Three light-morph adult **Ferruginous Hawks** were found in the Isabel Valley on the Mt. Hamilton CBC on 19 Dec (MMR, MJM). Two birds were seen in Morgan Hill on 29 Dec (ECu, NC, JeM *fide* JMa) as well. Wintering **Prairie Falcons** away from the Diablo Range included one near the Stanford dish on 9 Dec (CS), and one that was found at the Palo Alto Baylands from 11 Dec through the end of December (AJ, KC, v.ob.). Unusual numbers of **Lesser Yellowlegs** were found this month. Single birds were seen in the Palo Alto FCB on 8 Dec (PMB) and 17 Dec (JMe, MMe, MN). One to four birds were on Salt Pond A8 in Alviso 10-15 Dec (MMR, MJM et al.) and one to two birds were nearby in the vicinity of Salt Pond A12 on 12-15 Dec (MJM). A single bird was found along Salt Pond A18 on 16 Dec (CJC, JC *fide* AV). Finally, a single bird was also in the New Chicago Marsh 24-31 Dec

Field Notes *cont'd*

(MMR, MJM). Not quite in the county, five **Red Knots** were on the San Francisquito Creek delta on 17 Dec (MMR). The best place for **Sanderlings** in the South Bay is on some of the abandoned salt ponds in Alviso. Between 10 and 16 Dec 4-12 birds were counted on these ponds (MMR et al.) with a single bird in the impoundment north of the Alviso Marina on 15 Dec (MJM). Another single bird was just north of the county line on the San Francisquito Creek delta on 17 Dec (MMR). A juvenile **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** was found in the New Chicago Marsh on the San Jose CBC on 16 Dec (MJM). For the next two weeks this Asian vagrant played 'hide in the pickleweed' with a multitude of birders and, often as not, won (v.ob.). December is exceptionally late for this vagrant calidrid but there is a precedent—a bird seen on the San Jose CBC in 1985 that remained until 5 Jan 1986. Sharp-tailed mania did result in the finding of a female **Ruff** at the New Chicago Marsh on 18 Dec (MMR, MJM) through the end of the month (v.ob.). This vagrant was a consolation prize for some. It may be that this is the same bird that was found nearby into early October. The now adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** returned to Lake Cunningham on 16 Dec (MJM, MM), just in time for the San Jose CBC. This is the fifth consecutive winter it has spent at Lake Cunningham. The **Black Skimmer** flock at Charleston Slough has held constant at 20 to 22 birds during December (m.ob.).

Roadrunners through Orioles

A **Greater Roadrunner** was found in San Antonio Valley on 19 Dec (WGB). A male **Rufous Hummingbird** at the Silver Creek Country Club on 29 Dec (CJC, DO *fide* JMa) is unusual for December and is probably trying to overwinter, rather than being an early spring arrival. Only four **Lewis's Woodpeckers** were reported from the Isabel Valley on the Mt. Hamilton CBC on 19 Dec

(MMR, MJM). A wintering **Lewis's** was found along Bailey Road, south of the Coyote Narrows on 29 Dec (TK, EG, ChW *fide* JMa), for a rare record on the valley floor. This bird has remained into January (v.ob.). An immature **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was found at the Alamos Ground Water Recharge Ponds next to Almaden Expressway on 2 Dec (AV) and has been seen there into January (v.ob.). The similar immature plumage of the Red-naped Sapsucker is generally not held past October. An immature sapsucker found on Alamos Creek along Royalwood Way on 29 Dec (BBrr, TO *fide* JMa) may be a different bird. A **Pileated Woodpecker** was seen at Monte Bello OSP on 7 Dec (MMR). Another bird was found in Wunderlich Park on the Palo Alto CBC on 17 Dec (MDd et al.). They are becoming more common in San Mateo County on the eastern side of the crest (GGH). **Tree Swallows** were found in a number of spots this month. Three to 13 birds were at Lake Cunningham 1-16 Dec (MJM) with the high count on the latter date. A single bird was over Salt Pond A8 in Alviso on 10 Dec (MMR) and three were over the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds on 16 Dec (RC, GO, VS-Y). **Violet-green Swallows** were slightly more widespread, with up to 50 birds at Lake Cunningham on 15 Dec (MJM), 17 at the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds on 16 Dec (RC, GO, VS-Y), as many as 21 birds along Coyote Creek between Riverside GC and Metcalf Road on 29 Dec (MMR, MJM), and one bird over the New Chicago Marsh on 31 Dec (MMR et al.). Much less expected, a **Barn Swallow** was seen over the San Jose-Santa Clara WPCP drying ponds on 16 Dec (RC, GO, VS-Y), two to five birds were found in the vicinity of the Palo Alto FCB and the Mountain View Forebay 23-26 Dec (MJM, v.ob.) with the high count of five on 26 Dec (MDd et al.), and two birds were over the New Chicago Marsh on 31 Dec (MMR). These are remarkable numbers, considering that I have only two



A *Lewis's Woodpecker* near IBM on Bailey Road was a great surprise on the Calero-Morgan Hill CBC. Sketch by BB-W

previous December records for the county. A **Red-breasted Nuthatch** found in Los Altos on 17 Dec (KHt) is the only report this winter. The winter crop of **Golden-crowned Kinglets** has not been much better with nine birds found at Monte Bello on 7 Dec (MMR) and a single bird in Edenvale Park on 29 Dec (JMa et al.). A **Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher** seen along Coyote Creek below Hwy. 237 on 16 Dec (VS-Y, MS, TG) was an excellent find as this summer resident is generally found overwintering only one year in four. **Phainopeplas** have been scarce this year so a total of nine in the eastern Isabel Valley on 19 Dec (MMR, MJM) was a remarkable concentration. Wintering **Orange-crowned Warblers** were dug out in quantity on the Palo Alto CBC on 17 Dec. Four birds were found in the Sunnyvale WPCP fennel patch (MJM), and singles were found on Embarcadero Way in Palo Alto, Stevens Creek below Hwy 101, and on the Moffett Field GC (MMR). An inland bird along Coyote

cont'd on Page 10

2001 SANTA CLARA COUNTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Species	SJ 12/16/01	PA 12/17/01	MtH 12/19/01	Cal-MH 12/29/01	Species	SJ 12/16/01	PA 12/17/01	MtH 12/19/01	Cal-MH 12/29/01
Pied-billed Grebe	69	✓	23	82	Peregrine Falcon	5	✓	-	2
Horned Grebe	7	✓	-	2	Prairie Falcon	4	CW	1	-
Eared Grebe	2407	✓	1	20	Falcon, sp	1	-	-	-
Red-necked Grebe	-	✓	-	-	Ring-necked Pheasant	13	✓	-	-
Western Grebe	85	✓	-	3	Wild Turkey	31	✓	23	164
Clark's Grebe	14	✓	-	-	California Quail	101	✓	458	309
<i>Aechmophorus</i> , sp	16	-	-	-	Clapper Rail	1	✓	-	-
American White Pelican	24	✓	-	7	Virginia Rail	25	✓	-	-
Brown Pelican	16	✓	-	-	Sora	4	✓	-	1
Double-crested Cormorant	102	✓	-	293	Common Moorhen	12	✓	-	6
American Bittern	-	✓	-	3	American Coot	4013	✓	629	1042
Great Blue Heron	31	✓	5	24	Sandhill Crane	-	-	-	-
Great Egret	64	✓	1	31	Black-bellied Plover	145	✓	-	-
Snowy Egret	50	✓	-	35	Snowy Plover	-	-	-	-
Green Heron	1	✓	-	3	Semipalmated Plover	-	✓	-	-
Black-crowned Night-Heron	406	✓	1	17	Killdeer	111	✓	20	53
Greater White-fronted Goose	1	-	-	1	Black-necked Stilt	652	✓	-	-
Snow Goose	-	-	-	1	American Avocet	1626	✓	-	-
Canada Goose	459	✓	9	252	Greater Yellowlegs	23	✓	10	-
Wood Duck	3	✓	23	127	Lesser Yellowlegs	1	✓	-	-
Green-winged Teal	217	✓	-	21	yellowlegs, sp	6	-	-	-
Mallard	2211	✓	58	759	Willet	25	✓	-	-
Northern Pintail	131	✓	-	1	Spotted Sandpiper	3	-	-	10
Blue-winged Teal	-	✓	-	-	Whimbrel	-	✓	-	-
Cinnamon Teal	116	✓	-	5	Long-billed Curlew	175	✓	-	-
Northern Shoveler	4688	✓	5	9	Marbled Godwit	100	✓	-	-
Gadwall	323	✓	56	102	Ruddy Turnstone	-	-	-	-
Eurasian Wigeon	1	✓	-	-	Red Knot	-	✓	-	-
American Wigeon	101	✓	90	32	Sanderling	17	✓	-	-
Canvasback	257	✓	-	28	Western Sandpiper	97	✓	-	-
Redhead	2	✓	-	3	Least Sandpiper	426	✓	-	14
Ring-necked Duck	36	✓	35	142	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	1	-	-	-
Greater Scaup	26	✓	-	22	Dunlin	50	✓	-	-
Lesser Scaup	7	✓	-	113	Ruff	CW	-	-	-
<i>Aythya</i> , sp	37	-	-	-	<i>Calidris</i> ("peep"), sp	600	-	-	-
Surf Scoter	-	✓	-	2	Short-billed Dowitcher	60	✓	-	-
Common Goldeneye	13	✓	-	63	Long-billed Dowitcher	363	✓	-	-
Barrow's Goldeneye	-	✓	-	-	dowitcher, sp	753	-	-	-
Bufflehead	428	✓	99	138	Common Snipe	42	✓	1	2
Hooded Merganser	4	✓	-	1	Bonaparte's Gull	1498	✓	-	9
Common Merganser	43	✓	1	81	Mew Gull	1119	-	-	29
Red-breasted Merganser	37	✓	-	-	Ring-billed Gull	1351	✓	-	382
Ruddy Duck	1813	✓	39	135	California Gull	2928	✓	-	3338
duck, sp	12	-	-	-	Herring Gull	11,295	✓	-	411
Turkey Vulture	150	✓	2	60	Thayer's Gull	52	✓	-	37
Osprey	-	-	-	7	Iceland Gull	-	*	-	-
White-tailed Kite	32	✓	1	29	Lesser Black-backed Gull	1	-	-	-
Bald Eagle	1	-	-	1	Western Gull	238	✓	-	-
Northern Harrier	43	✓	-	9	Glaucous-winged Gull	175	✓	-	13
Sharp-shinned Hawk	4	✓	4	4	Glaucous Gull	-	-	-	-
Cooper's Hawk	14	✓	3	5	gull, sp	8540	-	-	3631
<i>Accipiter</i> , sp	2	-	-	1	Forster's Tern	4	✓	-	-
Red-shouldered Hawk	31	✓	2	40	Black Skimmer	-	✓	-	-
Red-tailed Hawk	125	✓	29	102	Rock Dove	2829	✓	-	1665
Red-tailed (Harlan's) Hawk	1	-	-	-	Band-tailed Pigeon	-	✓	71	15
Ferruginous Hawk	-	-	2	2	Mourning Dove	804	✓	83	551
Golden Eagle	6	✓	6	5	Greater Roadrunner	-	-	1	-
American Kestrel	90	✓	10	95	Barn Owl	1	✓	-	4
Merlin	4	✓	1	4	Western Screech-Owl	14	✓	4	9

Species	SJ 12/16/01	PA 12/17/01	MtH 12/19/01	Cal-MH 12/29/01
Great Horned Owl	9	✓	5	5
Northern Pygmy-Owl	2	-	-	CW
Burrowing Owl	34	✓	-	1
Northern Saw-whet Owl	-	-	-	1
White-throated Swift	75	CW	-	-
Anna's Hummingbird	590	✓	2	377
Rufus Hummingbird	-	-	-	1
Belted Kingfisher	20	✓	5	19
Lewis's Woodpecker	-	-	13	1
Acorn Woodpecker	72	✓	129	132
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	-	-	-	1
Red-breasted Sapsucker	25	✓	10	3
Nuttall's Woodpecker	80	✓	28	99
Downy Woodpecker	20	✓	2	16
Hairy Woodpecker	1	✓	18	4
Northern (Yel-sh) Flicker	-	-	-	-
Northern (Red-sh x Yel-sh) Flicker	-	-	-	-
Northern (Red-sh) Flicker	190	✓	82	202
Pileated Woodpecker	-	✓	-	-
Black Phoebe	244	✓	32	187
Say's Phoebe	31	✓	2	22
Horned Lark	112	-	-	75
Tree Swallow	16	-	-	-
Violet-green Swallow	30	✓	-	21
Barn Swallow	1	-	-	-
swallow, sp	-	-	-	4
Steller's Jay	149	✓	23	187
Western Scrub Jay	489	✓	308	591
Yellow-billed Magpie	241	-	204	102
American Crow	375	✓	65	559
Common Raven	88	✓	28	21
Chestnut-backed Chickadee	200	✓	-	317
Oak Titmouse	61	✓	160	193
Bushtit	1102	✓	89	785
Red-breasted Nuthatch	-	✓	-	-
White-breasted Nuthatch	42	✓	75	58
Pygmy Nuthatch	-	✓	-	-
Brown Creeper	8	✓	2	7
Rock Wren	8	-	1	8
Canyon Wren	-	-	1	-
Bewick's Wren	41	✓	49	70
House Wren	1	-	-	-
Winter Wren	-	✓	-	2
Marsh Wren	95	✓	-	6
American Dipper	-	-	-	-
Golden-crowned Kinglet	2	✓	-	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	321	✓	51	224
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1	-	-	-
Western Bluebird	113	✓	258	96
Townsend's Solitaire	-	-	1	-
Hermit Thrush	141	✓	15	76
American Robin	1438	✓	202	3323
Varied Thrush	22	✓	4	39
Wrentit	25	✓	48	27
Northern Mockingbird	170	✓	1	83
California Thrasher	3	✓	41	20
Black-backed Wagtail	-	-	-	-
American Pipit	249	✓	-	35
Cedar Waxwing	835	✓	-	655

Species	SJ 12/16/01	PA 12/17/01	MtH 12/19/01	Cal-MH 12/29/01
Phainopepla	-	-	10	-
Loggerhead Shrike	40	✓	-	10
European Starling	4391	✓	251	2857
Hutton's Vireo	9	✓	1	10
Orange-crowned Warbler	10	✓	-	1
Yellow Warbler	-	-	-	-
Yellow-rumped Warbler (form?) (Myrtle)	1194	✓	3	351
(Audubon's)	8	-	-	5
Black-throated Gray Warbler	305	-	-	419
Townsend's Warbler	-	-	-	-
Common Yellowthroat	22	✓	-	10
Western Tanager	60	✓	-	8
Spotted Towhee	1	-	-	-
California Towhee	76	✓	102	111
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	306	✓	157	318
Vesper Sparrow	10	-	-	15
Lark Sparrow	-	-	1	-
Sage Sparrow	118	-	48	30
Savannah Sparrow	-	-	5	-
Grasshopper Sparrow	124	✓	17	54
Fox Sparrow	-	-	-	1
Fox Sparrow, Eastern form	70	✓	43	17
Song Sparrow	-	-	-	1
Lincoln's Sparrow	235	✓	2	105
Swamp Sparrow	65	✓	4	10
White-throated Sparrow	-	CW	-	-
Golden-crowned Sparrow	1	✓	-	2
White-crowned Sparrow	1222	✓	359	812
Lark Sparrow	2077	✓	433	1132
sparrow, sp	-	CW	-	-
Dark-eyed Junco (form?)	286	-	144	53
Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco	-	✓	-	790
Nutmeg Mannikin	764	-	1024	-
Red-winged Blackbird	-	-	-	7
Tricolored Blackbird	2109	✓	116	1444
Western Meadowlark	13	✓	37	38
Brewer's Blackbird	526	✓	183	373
Brown-headed Cowbird	596	✓	254	1052
blackbird, sp	18	✓	-	39
Bullock's Oriole	941	-	180	451
Purple Finch	-	-	-	1
House Finch	9	✓	37	7**
Pine Siskin	1466	✓	10	1062
Lesser Goldfinch	5	✓	-	-
Lawrence's Goldfinch	268	✓	99	279
American Goldfinch	-	-	2	-
Goldfinch sp	261	✓	-	49
House Sparrow	-	-	1	15
Total Species	259	✓	105	56
Total	163	163	94	143
Total	80,730	unknown	7,389	35,270

Key: sp = species undetermined
 CW = Count Week
 * = Report submitted for review
 ** = unestablished exotic, cannot be counted
 SJ = San Jose: compiled by AnnVerdi
 PA = Palo Alto: only the species list was available per Matthew Dodder
 MtH = Mount Hamilton: compiled by Don Schmoltd
 Cal-MH = Calero-Morgan Hill: compiled by John Mariani

Field Notes *cont'd*

Creek near Hwys 101 and 85 on 29 Dec (MMR) was less expected. A **Yellow Warbler** found at the Alamos Ground Water Recharge Ponds 3-4 Dec (JMa, MMR) was the first found this winter. A **MacGillivray's Warbler** was seen along Matadero Creek below Hwy 101 on 8 Dec (DSt) for only our fourth winter record. A female or immature male **Western Tanager** along the Guadalupe River near Trimble on 16 Dec (GHt, ADeM) was the only one found on our local Christmas counts. A **Green-tailed Towhee** was seen along Coyote Creek below Tasman on 21 Dec (SH, GB) and was positively identified on 22 Dec (MJM). It has been seen into January (v.ob.). A bird wintered at this location two years ago. Always a good winter find, a **Vesper Sparrow** was seen in San Antonio Valley on 19 Dec (WGB). Nearly as rare as a wintering bird, a **Grasshopper Sparrow** was seen at the south end of Coyote Ridge on 29 Dec (RH, KF, JD, MS *fide* JMa). An adult **Swamp Sparrow** was seen at the Palo Alto Baylands on 14 Dec (MMR) and is the first bird found this winter. **White-throated Sparrows** were found at Ed Levin CP on 16 Dec (ER *fide* AV), the Palo Alto FCB on 24 Dec (MJM), New Almaden on 29 Dec (AV), and Uvas Creek on 29 Dec (GHt). Feeder birds, either new or continuing, include two in Los Gatos (JDu), one in San Jose (JAC), one in Santa Clara (CL), and one in Los Altos (PLN). A grosbeak (*Pheucticus* spp.) was found in Almaden-Quicksilver CP on 29 Dec (GM *fide* JMa), but has not been identified to species. Rose-breasted and Black-headed are about equally common in winter. A female **Bullock's Oriole** in Edenvale Park on 29 Dec (JMa et al.) was a good find for this winter.

RARITIES: Please drop me a note: Bill Bousman, 321 Arlington Way, Menlo Park, CA 94025, or: bousman@merlin.arc.nasa.gov

San Jose CBC *cont'd from Page 1*

Other good owl numbers were 14 Western Screech-owls and four Great Horned Owls in the early morning hours at Alum Rock Park by Grant's owling party. Barn Owl and Northern Pygmy-owl were also recorded for the Count.

A couple of late day observations near the Bay were noteworthy: 144 Black-bellied Plovers coming in to roost in the mudflats at low tide near Triangle Marsh, and over 40 Turkey Vultures gathering for a nightly roost along Coyote Creek below Highway 237.

We'd like to thank the sector leaders for organizing such a large and efficient group of volunteer counters; the Rare Bird Committee for scrutinizing the reports of unusual sightings for veracity; Debbie and Steve Thompson for putting on the countdown dinner; and all the counters who made this day a big success. See you next year!

Observers: Bruce Barrett (BBrr), Gina Barton (GB), Bonnie Bedford-White (BBW), Bill Bousman (WGB), Phyllis Browning (PMB), Norma Cabot (NC), Richard Carlson (RC), Keith Chamberlin (KC), Jack Cole (JAC), Rita Colwell (RCO), Rob Colwell (RbC), Chuck Coston (CJC), Joan Coston (JC), Emelie Curtis (ECu) Al DeMartini (ADeM), Matthew Dodder (MDd), John Drum (JD), Jean Dubois (JDu), Al Eisner (AME), Karl Fowler (KF), Tom Goodier (TG), Elaine Gould (EG), Gloria G. Heller (GGH), Rick Herder (RH), Grant Hoyt (GHt), Karen Hoyt (KHt), Sherry Hudson (SH), Alvaro Jaramillo (AJa), Roland Kenner (RK), Toni Koenen (TK), Amy Lauterbach (AL), Cindy Lee (CL), Mike Mammoser (MJM), John Mariani (JMa), David McIntyre (DMcI), Greg Meissner (GM), John Meyer (JMe), Maria Meyer (MMe), Mary Murphy (MM), Jean Myers (JeM), Mich Ninokata (MN), Paul Noble (PLN), George Oetzel (GO), Doug Ohlberg (DO), Tad Ottman (TO), Bob Reiling (RWR), Mike Rogers (MMR), Ed Rooks (ER), Cagan Sekercioglu (CS), Marty Sidor (MS), Vicki Silvas-Young (VS-Y), Mary Simpson (MS), James Smith (JS), Dick Stovel (DSt), Vivek Tiwari (ViT), Frank Vanslager (FV), Ann Verdi (AV), Chris Wolfe (ChW), Debbie Wong (DW), and James Yurchenco (JY).

Palo Alto CBC Mon. Dec. 17

The forces of nature were less friendly to those who chose to count birds for the Palo Alto CBC the day after San Jose's, but counters managed to find 158 species of birds on a blustery day. Highlights included Red-necked Grebe, Barrow's Goldeneye, Red Knot, Pileated Woodpecker, and Violet-green Swallow. (Lark Sparrow and Swamp Sparrow were recorded during the Count week, and a tantalizing report of Iceland Gull on the Count day remains under review.)

Thanks to Matthew Dodder for organizing the Count so efficiently, and Ruth and Gene Troetschler of Los Altos for their warm hospitality as they hosted yet another countdown dinner.

Mt. Hamilton CBC Wed. Dec. 19

For the first time in the 25 year history of this back-country Count, Bald Eagle was missed, as the reliable bird(s) from the Isabel Valley lake were absent. Compiler Don Schmoltd and his loyal cadre of 28 intrepid counters nevertheless recorded 98 other species in cool, but tolerable, conditions in the eastern hinterlands of Santa Clara County. A White-tailed Kite flying over Lick Observatory may be the "highest" record for that species in the county; other notables were 23 Wild Turkeys, a Gr. Roadrunner, a Townsend's Solitaire and a Vesper Sparrow. Lotus and Keith Baker again welcomed the counters for a cozy dinner atop Mt. Hamilton at day's end.

Calero-Morgan Hill CBC Sat. Dec. 29

Thanks to everyone who braved dismal weather to make the third annual Calero-Morgan Hill Christmas Bird Count such a success! We faced heavy rain and gusty winds in the early morning, but the afternoon was reasonably nice. Despite the rain we did really well, tallying 35,270 birds of 143 species, 11 of which were new to the count!

As always, some birds were missed on count day. But our misses were made up for with a host of rarities! Highlights included such unexpected treats as Rufous Hummingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, White-throated Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Bullock's Oriole. A Burrowing Owl in Morgan Hill was a first for the count and an especially welcome find, since the population there has been all but wiped out in recent years.

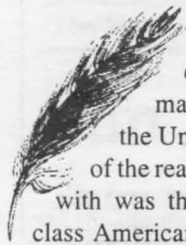
Thanks for hosting dinner, John.

For CBC results from all over the U.S.: <http://birdsource.cornell.edu/>

Prop 40 — reason to VOTE this March

by Kelly Crowley

SCVAS Environmental Advocate



As a political science major, I spent a lot of time discussing with my classmates why voter turnout in the United States is so low. One of the reasons we routinely came up with was that the average, working-class American often sees little connection between the ballot box and their quality of life. This March, Californians have the opportunity to cast a vote that clearly, directly does so.

Proposition 40, called the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Act of 2002, would authorize the state to sell \$2.6 billion in bonds for habitat acquisition and protection of the state's natural, cultural and historic resources. Last November, voters in 20 states approved bonds or taxes that would preserve and promote open space — promising news for backers of California's bond, which is, by far, the largest in the nation.

Critics of Prop 40 complain that voters approved a large bond measure just two years ago. Similarly, some in Santa Clara County point out that voters in the Open Space Authority approved, in a very close election, an increase in their property taxes from \$12 to \$32 a year to buy hillsides, protect farmland and improve trails (see Page 5 for details).

Nearly all of the funds from the 2000 Park Bond, however, were dedicated before the bond even passed, due to a severe backlog of maintenance and acquisition projects in parks throughout the state. This backlog occurred after the state went through the 90's without ever passing a parks and open space bond. Further, this bond measure will do more than just purchase land. Funds include, specifically, \$375 million allocated for protection of water resources (both wetland and riparian areas); \$300 million to the Wildlife Conservation Board for the improvement and protection of rare and endangered fish and wildlife habitats; \$445 million to the eight State Conservancies, including the San Francisco Bay Conservancy; and \$225

million to State Parks for improvement of existing parks, including land acquisition. The key aspect of this bond measure, in sharp contrast to the one passed two years ago, is that few of the funds are dedicated to specific parks, projects or pieces of land yet.

This is not to say that no one knows what to do with the money, because ideas abound. If Prop 40 passes, most funds would be distributed on a competitive basis, and Santa Clara County has many sites worthy of the competition. For example, one vital acquisition opportunity got some media attention in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. An article in early December argued that the success or failure of Proposition 40 could determine the fate of the Cargill salt pond restoration deal. With the economic downturn and the energy crisis, state coffers are running low and "surpluses" have disappeared. This will likely limit state funding of any purchase deal. Federal funding is also unlikely, for many of the same reasons. Senator Diane Feinstein, a strong proponent of some sort of deal with Cargill, refused to comment on the possibility of using the park bond to fund purchase of Cargill's land. But, as the state Resources Agency's communications director said, using some of the Prop 40 funds, "is a distinct possibility." If it passes.

SCVAS is working with both governmental and community organizations to help hone a priority list of acquisitions in our region. Some of these, like the serpentine soils of Coyote Ridge, are well known. Other lesser-known sites contain key pieces of regional biodiversity, such as the sycamore woodlands near Casa de Fruta along Highway 152. SCVAS member Bill Bousman has compiled a compelling list of local biodiversity; we will be drawing on his work in our efforts. With these priorities in hand, we can try to unite various conservation organizations to better compete for Prop 40 funding. Again, if it passes.

The nonprofit Public Policy Institute of California conducted a statewide sur-

vey and found broad support, across regions and demographic groups, for Prop 40. Despite the recent decline in consumer confidence, 74 percent of Californians surveyed said they would vote "yes" on the bond measure. It seems that Californians do see the connection between this Proposition and their quality of life. I encourage you all to exercise your right to vote and head to the ballot box in March. **Mark it on your calendar, and VOTE to improve your quality of life** (and the lifestyles of the furred and feathered around you).

Audubon's Bay Restoration Program Launches Regional Activist Network

Do you want to see the largest and most ecologically important estuary on the U.S. Pacific Coast restored? Are you tired of feeling like a small voice when it comes to bringing attention to an important piece of local land in the Bay Area?

Then join the Bay Area Activist Network, and keep in touch with what is happening locally and regionally concerning the Bay. This bi-monthly e-mail of special alerts is focused and utilized for the restoration of San Francisco Bay. The concerned citizens that sign up for this free e-mail service will have up-to-date information on what is happening to a local or regional location around the Bay.

Each alert will ask you to take just a couple minutes out of your day to take action on a pressing situation . . . and it could be right in your back yard!

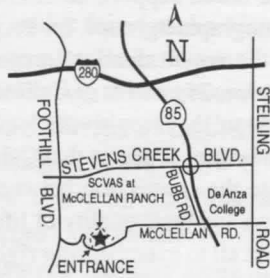
If you have questions or would like to sign up for a stronger voice, please e-mail: contact@audubonsfbay.org and provide your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address to become a partner in a team that is restoring your neighborhood and the entire Bay!

—Judd Klement
Regional Coordinator
National Audubon Society

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society
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GENERAL MEETINGS are held on the third Wednesday of each month except July, August and December and are open to the public.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS meetings are open to all members. Call the office at (408) 252-3747 for times and directions.

RARE BIRD ALERT: (415) 681-7422

KEEPING CONNECTED: E-mail us at <e-network@scvas.org> so we can send informative brief notes of special concern.

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